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ABSTRACT

An alternative operationalization of perceived marital power is proposed. Four types of power structure are identified and described: equalitarian marriages, husband dominated marriages, wife dominated marriages and marriages with differently perceived power structures. Two other variables (spouses' influence techniques and the use of physical violence by spouses) are considered in terms of their relationship to perceived marital power. (Author)

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PERCEIVED MARITAL POWER, INFLUENCE TECHNIQUES AND MARITAL VIOLENCE*

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INTRODUCTION

As Robert Blood suggests, much of our research on the sociology of the family "tends to run in ruts" and one of those "ruts" is the study of marital power (1976, p.8). Since the publication of the original study by Blood and Wolfe (1960), the topic of marital power has received widespread attention (for example, Bahr 1972; Cromwell and Olson 1975; Heer 1962; Hoffman 1960; Larson 1974; Safilios-Rothschild 1970; Turk and Bell 1972). However, in spite of the great amount of work, the field is far from coherent. To date, numerous studies on marital power have employed different definitions of the concept, used different methodologies and operationalizations, presented divergent interpretations of the findings, found the data supportive of multiple theoretical models, questioned the explanatory utility of the concept itself and even postulated as to sociologists' underlying motivations for expending so much time and energy on the topic.

Having said all that, one might wonder as to the wisdom of yet another paper on marital power. The answer is simple: the issue simply isn't going to go away. In terms of its methodology, marital power is an area in which one is challenged by the relationship between "subjective" and "objective" realities; in terms of the theoretical underpinnings, it is a topic which raises tantalizing questions as to the relationship between structural and normative chracteristics: and finally, empirically, it is an area in which the complex interrelationships of many variables beg to be classified.

In view of the above, the goals of this paper are modest. The primary focus is the presentation of an alternative operationalization of the concept of marital power. The secondary focus is a consideration of two aspects of married life that are both theoretically important to an understanding of,

and empirically correlated with marital power structures: influence techniques and physical violence used by spouses.

SAMPLE

The data for this study were obtained from in-depth interviews with fifty couples. In order to obtain a sample that was not entirely self-selected, nor one that was chosen on the basis of one specific social characteristic, but would be likely to agree to participate, the population selected was that of all married part-time graduate students at a New England state college. This population (N=1579) was chosen because it was assumed that part-time students (who had already completed a B.A. degree) and their spouses would be more likely to have other roles in addition to that of student (e.g., worker, parent).

In order to obtain a sample of fifty couples, contact was made with seventy-nine members of the population, selected by systematic random sampling. The initial contact was a letter sent to the homes of members of the population. The letter explained the purpose of the study, the kind of topic that would be covered and asked the person and his or her spouse to participate. The second contact was a phone call to answer any questions about the study, and, if they were willing, to schedule an interview. In four cases, the second contact did not take place (no listed telephone or answer), in two cases the couple was no longer part of the sample (divorce or separation) and in two cases time conflicts did not permit the interview from taking place. Of those who received the second contact and were in intact marriages, twenty-one, or 25%, refused to participate.

It is recognized that the findings of this study can only be generalized to a small, relatively homogeneous population. Like the population, the sample was white, middle class and predominantly Catholic. There was, however,

a wide range in the characteristics of age (from twenty-one to sixty-three years of age), length of marriage (one to twenty-nine years), number of children (none to five), and wife's work status (employed part-time, full-time and not employed in a wage earning job).

Pre-testing of the interview schedule and questionnaire was conducted during the fall of 1974. The interviews with the sample took place between January and July 1975.

PERCEIVED MARITAL POWER

Power is most often defined as the ability of an individual to change the behavior of other members of a social system (Olson and Cromwell 1975a, p.5). Family power is a multidimensional concept which is measured through behavioral acts in which the degree of one's power is put to the test (Safilios-Rothschild 1970, p.540). In this study, perceived marital power is defined as the spouses' perceptions of the extent to which each controls the other's behavior.

Defining perceived marital power in terms of the way that family members themselves see the power structure means that the researcher is interested in a "subjective" rather than "objective" view of the family. I therefore used a self-report method rather than an evaluation of observed family members' behavior in, for example, a discussion or game situation (see for example Kenkel 1957; Straus 1967). "Self-report methods tap the subjective reality by measuring power from the perspective of those individuals involved in the relationship" (Olson and Cromwell 1975b, p.137).

The method of data collection used avoided some of the problems of previous research. As Safilios-Rothschild has pointed out, other studies obtained data from only one spouse, usually the wife, based on the dubious assumption that the other spouse's responses would be simliar (1969b, p.290).

In addition, even when researchers have obtained data from both spouses, they have continued to look for a measure of power that would act as a reflection of the one "valid reality" rather than viewing the discrepancies between husbands' and wives' reports as valid. Rather than assuming that both spouse's reports would be similar, in this study, both the husband and the wife in each couple were interviewed at the same time in different rooms. In this way the possibility that the husband's and wife's realities might not coincide could be examined.

In addition, this study relied primarily on general questions concerning each spouse's perception of the power structure and secondarily on a series of specific questions concerning decision-making. All of the questions were open ended. In this way the study avoided questions concerning the validity of measuring power by asking respondents which spouse makes the decision in a given set of areas. This method of measuring power, which has been used in the bulk of previous research, has been questioned on numerous grounds: that the specific decisions which are used have a direct impact on the study's findings (Centers, Raven and Rodrigues 1971, pp.265-267); that calculating an overall decision-making score makes the untenable assumption that all decisions are equally important (Safilios-Rothschild 1970, p.543); and that response alternatives like "both make decisions" in a culture which supports an equalitarian ideal may tend to distort findings by an artificial over-selection of this type of choice (Safilios-Rothschild 1970, p.544). Finally, since a whole field of decision-making may be relegated to a weaker partner (Safilios-Rothschild 1970), and each area of decision-making may not be equally salient to the spouses (Komarovsky 1967), a methodology which emphasizes general questions allows for these issues to be explored.

Operationalization of perceived marital power. In order to classify the couples according to their perceived marital power structures, both spouses

were interviewed separately and were asked a series of questions which explored their perceptions of their ability to influence and control each other. In analyzing the couple's perceived marital power structure,primary importance was given to the husband's and wife's answers to the questions concerning 1) the respondent's feeling about who usually gets his or her way when the couple disagrees, 2) the outcome(s) of the example(s) of decision-making that the respondent cites when asked about recent decisions*, 3) the respondent's feeling about his or her ability to force the spouse into something the spouse was initially opposed to and 4) the respondent's feeling of satisfaction about the amount of power that the spouse sees him or herself as having.

The answer to the last question was considered especially important because it was asked after quite a bit of discussion about power and influence. It usually involved a restatement of the respondent's perception of the balance of power; sometimes it included a clarification of, and occasionally a re-evaluation of, the situation. In fact, a consequence of the list of specific decisions which preceded this question may have been to structure, in part, the respondent's frame of reference in answering it.

Based on the answers to these four questions, each spouse was then classified as to his or her individual perception of the balance of power into one of the following three categories: 1) equalitarian - the spouses feels that neither one is dominant in making decisions and exerting influence over the other spouse; 2) husband dominated - the spouse feels that the husband is dominant in terms of making decision and exerting influence over the wife; and 3) wife dominated -

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*This was most often used by the respondent as an illustration of the general pattern or, in those cases in which the outcome of the specific decision differed from the general pattern, an attempt was made to explain how and why this specific instance was different from which was perceived as typical.

the spouse feels that the wife is dominant in terms of making decisions and exerting influence over the husband.

After the initial classification of each spouse's perception, the answers to questions which asked about the respondent's view of the spouse's view of the situation, about the extent to which he or she delegated responsibility to the spouse and about decision-making in twenty-two specific areas were considered as "backup information." In general, the answers to these questions were in agreement with and tended to support the initial classification of each spouse's view of the perceived marital power structure.

After the husband and wife were each classified as to his/her perception of the marriage, these perceptions were compared. In forty-six of the fifty couples, the spouses' perceptions of the distribution of marital power were substantially the same. In the other four couples, "his" marriage was clearly different from "her" marriage*. There were four types of perceived marital power type identified: equalitarian (22 couples), husband dominated (19 couples), wife dominated (5 couples), and differently perceived (4 couples).

The equalitarian marriage: "it balances out." The most important characteristic of this type of couple is that both the wife and the husband feel that neither one of them is dominant in terms of making decisions or exerting influence. In all of these families the spouses perceive themselves as exerting joint and

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*Although the general perceptions of the balance of power were more important in classifying the couples, as a further check on the similarity of perceptions, the husbands' and wives' responses on the list of specific decisions were compared. The percentage of items on which they agreed was calculated. Data were not collected for all 22 specific decisions for all 50 couples due to respondent refusal to answer the question or nonapplicability of the question. The range of agreement of perceptions was from 63% to 100%. The average percentage of agreement on specific decisions for the 46 couples with similar perceptions was 82%; the average percentage of agreement for couples with different perceptions was 74%.

equal influence over at least a sizeable proportion of family matters. In all of these families as well, each spouse is seen as having more influence in some areas than he or she does in other areas - either because he or she knows more about it, is affected by what happens and/or feels more strongly about it.

The proportion of matters which are defined as "personal" issues as opposed to "family" issues varies from family to family. At one end of the continuum are those couples who define quite a few issues as "personal." Among these couples the husband and wife each have almost complete autonomy in areas defined as "his" and "hers" and which are perceived, by both, as being of equal importance. On the other end of the continuum are the couples in which most matters are defined as concerning both of them. Among these couples almost all things are seen as being decided upon after a lot of "give and take" in which both spouses are seen as equally likely to do the "giving"*.

All twenty-two of the husbands and twenty-one of the wives are satisfied with the amount of influence they have. They feel that they have "enough" but not "too much." The one wife who is not satisfied said that she would rather her husband be dominant so that the children would see him as the "head of the family."

Mr. and Mrs. 19 are a typical equalitarian couple. The following excerpts from their interviews illustrate the spouses' perceptions of their power structure:

Mrs. 19
Q: How do you reach major decisions in your family?
A: Probably after much haggling. We discuss a lot of things before we go ahead and do them. We do a lot by impulse too.

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*In this way, the equalitarian couple classification is similar to Komarovsky's "balance of power" type which included "equalitarian" couples who make decisions jointly, "stalemate" couples in which each spouse was only strong enough to frustrate the other's wishes and those couples in which spouses had supremacy in different but equal areas (1967, p.223).

Q: If there was a really important decision to be made and you and your husband disagreed, who would usually get their way?
A: I guess both of us. It depends - if one of us was going to be hurt by it, then we wouldn't do it.
Q: Have you had to make any important decisions recently?
A: Well, he's building a boat, and I wanted a pleasure boat and he wanted a skiff - so he's building a skiff with a cabin on it - sort of a compromise.
Q: Do you think you could force him to accept something that he was initially opposed to?
A: Yes, if it didn't mean that he was compromising. He would go along with it, except that we don't ask each other to go against a basic principle that we are really strong about.
Q: How do you feel about the amount of influence and control you have in your family?
A: I like it the way it is. When I feel pushy, he gives me room.

Mr. 19
Q: How do you reach major decisions?
A: Jointly. We never argue too much. Major decisions do not come overnight from one of us. We discuss it, we come up with some logical conclusion. If one disagrees strongly we try to rationalize it - talk it out and come up with something.
Q: If there was an important decision to be made and you and your wife disagreed, who would usually get their way?
A: It's 50-50, times we have disagreed. Once it was for her, to get a car and she got her way. Another time it was my way. No one keeps winning all the time. On small things - I guess it's the same.
Q: What was the last important decision you made?
A: I had a good job and was making more money than I'm making now. I wanted to quit and go to college and she wasn't working. I suggested quitting and she said she'd get a job and put me through school. No one won and no one lost.
Q: Do you feel you could force her into accepting something that she was initially opposed to?
A: If it got to the poin. I had to force her to do something, it wouldn't be worth doing.
Q: How do you feel about the amount of influence and control you have in your family?
A: I wouldn't change it, I have control over me. I decide what time to get up in the morning and what time to go to bed at night. My children, I have the power to tell them they must go to school. I don't have power over my wife. I don't rule her and she doesn't rule me.

The husband dominated marriage: "but he respects my opinion". The predominant characteristic of the husband dominated marriage is that both the husband and the wife perceive the husband as having more power than the wife does. In all 19 of these couples, although the wife is seen as having control in at least some areas, the husband is perceived as having final or overall control on family matters. In addition, in seven of the couples, the wives'

areas are defined as less important than the husbands' are.

However, even if the husband is seen as the dominant spouse, in most cases this is seen as being tempered by his "reasonableness". In the majority of cases (13 couples) the husband is perceived as consulting the wife on at least some of the things he decides about. These wives are pleased to be consulted and believe that their husbands respect their opinions and will consider them carefully before deciding. Similarly in 12 cases the wife feels that if she really wanted something, she could get her own way. Furthermore, seven husbands say they give in to their wives on minor issues in order to "keep the peace" in the family. These attributes make the great majority of the wives (14 cases) satisfied with the balance of power.

Mr. and Mrs. 33 are typical of husband dominated marriages. The following excerpts illustrate their perceptions.

Mrs. 33

Q: How do you reach major decisions?

A: Talk it over, he doesn't make a decision without telling me or asking me. It depends on who we're talking about - if it's very personal to him or me.

Q: If there was an important decision to be made and you and your husband disagree, who usually get their way?

A: If it's financial, I think he makes the final decision. We wanted to get an apartment before we got this place and I found one that I liked but it was more than he wanted to spend, and he said "No, we can't do it," and I didn't really fight with him.

Q: Are there things that would be more your decision than his?

A: Like we need a new bedspread and I want to spend $20 or $30 - he goes along - he doesn't deny me things. If it's more concerned with my things - my decision would hold more.

Q: What if it concerned both of you?

A: It's hard to say - depending on what it would be. If I was against something that he really wanted and it concerned both of us - I don't think he would do it - if I really felt that strongly about it. . . . I guess I see him as more of the head of the house. I think for all the practical purposes you need someone. When there are two people you can be more 50-50, but with a family it's different.

Q: Have you had to make any important decisions recently?

A: Yes. He applied for a job. He hasn't made any decision on it yet. I think it's kind of foolish. I can see as days go by, less and less I feel like standing in his way. That's usually the way decisions work out. Usually you have an objection at first and then you think it over. I let him do whatever he wants to do if he really believes it. I can't let it stay that way long. If he really wanted it I would probably support him.

Q: Do you feel you could force him into something he was initially opposed to.
A: Yes, I might. It would have to be important to me. It's hard to do it when you don't have an issue.
Q: How do you feel about the amount of influence and control you have in the family?
A: I think I'm happy about the amount of influence. It works out well. He respects my feelings and doesn't make decisions that really go against what I want.
Q: Would you want any more influence or any less influence?
A: No. I like it the way it is.

Mr. 33
Q: How do you reach major decisions in your family?
A: I like to think we discuss them. I like to think a major thing, if she was against something totally, I would respect her feelings.
Q: If there was an important family decision and you and your wife disagree, who would usually get their way?
A: I think I would. I seem to be the more dominant personality. I think I am a better decision maker. In spite of the situation, when I make a decision, I make a decision. I'm not going to go on for days.
Q: Do you think you could force your wife into accepting something she was initially opposed to?
A: I could, but I wouldn't use physical force. I wouldn't do it.
Q: How do you feel about the amount of influence or control you have in your family?
A: I could be very dominant and color her interpretation of different things and my wife would tend to be the type of person to accept them. Sometimes that can be bad.
Q: Would you like any more or any less influence?
A: I have no desire to be any more authoritian than I am.

The wife dominated marriage: "if it makes her happy". The essential characteristic of this type of power structure is that the husbands and wives share the perception that the wife is the more influential spouse. Although one husband felt the situation had occurred because his wife was the more logical person, the other four said it was basically because giving in made their wives easier to live with. Three of these husbands implied that if they were willing to take the consequences of their actions, they could become more powerful than they were at the present time.

In contrast to the husband dominated marriage, three of these wives saw at least a portion of their power as being covert and manipulative rather than being open control. And, in similar contrast, three of the husbands were dissatisfied with the balance of power and would have preferred to have had more. In

every case the husband was seen as having at least some areas under his control and was seen as being consulted by his wife on the other decisions as well - even if he would ultimately give in to her.

The following excerpts from interviews with Mr. and Mrs. 9 illustrate this type of power structure.

Mrs. 9

Q: How do you reach major decisions in your family?
A: We talk things out - we have to. We weigh both sides, see which one would be best.
Q: If there's an important decision to be made, and you and your husband disagree, who usually gets their way?
A: It depends on what it is. A few years ago, when he was changing jobs, it was a decision that had to be his. It meant a cut in pay and he knew what the growth of the place was. I wasn't familiar with it. He could see a future in this place. I know what's best for me in my situation.
Q: What about something that concerned you both equally?
A: I'd try to win out.
Q: How does it usually work out?
A: Usually I win, I'd say more times than not. If I think it's best, I tell him he doesn't know what's best.
Q: Do you think you could force your husband into accepting your decision on something he was initially opposed to?
A: Probably. If I really wanted to, I think so.
Q: How do you feel about the amount of influence or control you have in your family?
A: I'm satisfied. I put my two cents in. If I had a choice I'd be home on my rear end, not working. But, now I have more say than someone who is home. Others would say "my husband is out in the world every day and he knows best". Well, now I am too.

Mr. 9

Q: How would you say you reach major decisions in your family?
A: We both try and talk it out first. If I say I really want to do something, and she says "no", I'll still do it. If I like something I'll do it. I don't care what my wife says.
Q: If there was a really important family decision to be made and you and your wife disagree, who usually gets their way?
A: She would.
Q: Why is that?
A: First of all, you don't want to live with a miserable wife.
Q: Do you think you could force your wife into accepting something that she was initially opposed to?
A: No.
Q: How do you feel about the amount of influence or control you have in your family?
A: I don't think I have too much. I don't take advantage of things. Like my wife handles all the money, bills. She more or less uses that for a whip - to whip the horse.

Q: Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with that?
A: Dissatisfied.
Q: In what ways?
A: Doing certain things. If I say, "Let's go eat here," and she don't want to, she won't. If I say, "Let's go skiing this weekend," she won't go if she doesn't want to. I can't get her to do it or go. I could say, "Well, I'm leaving. I'm not coming back." She'd say, "Goodbye."

Marriages with differently percieved power structures: "his" marriage versus "her" marriage.

a) Each sees self as dominant (2 couples).

In these two families, each husband and wife feels that he or she is more powerful and believes that the other spouse would share that perception. All four feel that they each have separate spheres of influence, and see their spouses as having control over a substantial number of things. However, the essential quality of this marital power type is that each spouse feels that the balance of power favors himself or herself. In both couples the spouses feel able to force the other into accepting something. And, each believes that if the other spouse knew how much something meant to him or her, then he or she would "give into please me". During the interviews with both couples, the spouses related different decisions, each remembering the ones where he or she felt dominant. The spouses all feel satisfied with the power structure.

b) The wife feels she is dominant, the husband says they are equal (2 couples).

In both of these couples the husband is less involved with family matters than the wife. The wife appears to assume control by moving into a kind of "power vacuum" left by the husband. The wives both perceive themselves as dominant. The husbands feel they are about equal to their wives, and that if something were very important to them they would get their way. All four feel they could force the other spouse into something. While one husband feels satisfied with the status quo, the other reports that, although previously he

was satisfied, he would now like more control. Both wives feel that they have too much power. One wife doesn't want to have any less power, while the other would like less on the condition that her husband would take more. Both women see power and involvement in family life as related: in order to get more power their husbands will have to get more involved.

One explanation for these differing perceptions of the balance of power can be based on the husbands' outside interests. In both cases the husbands' career is a top priority item - the couple has either moved because of it or planned much of the family life around it. The husband does not feel at all "infringed upon" in this important area and may therefore define the situation as equal. The wife, on the other hand, feels she controls most of the other areas of family life, and therefore sees herself as dominant. It only may be when he is interested in exerting control in these other areas that the differences in perception will need to be reconciled.

ON POWER AND MARRIED LIFE

Clearly the most important reason for pursuing the concept of marital power is the possible utility it has for understanding other aspects of marriage. Due to considerations of space, I will briefly describe the way in which two of these concepts, influence techniques and marital violence, are related to the perceived marital power structure.

Influence techniques. "The investigation of the influence dynamics between spouses is extremely important, if not indispensible for the assessment of familial power structure" (Safilios-Rothschild 1969a, p.7). As both Safilios-Rothschild and Sprey (1972) have suggested, an understanding of the way in which spouses influence each other might be even more crucial than knowing how powerful the spouses perceive themselves to be. In addition to helping to clarify the issue of marital power, analyzing spouses' influence techniques can help us to understand one aspect of sex roles in the family. Through an analysis of

influence techniques, we can examine the validity of the widely held stereotype that women often get their way in families through manipulative and covert means, while men get their way by using open and forthright tactics.

In this study, husbands and wives were asked to describe how they would try to make the spouse go along with them, in the event that the spouse was opposed to something that was very important to them. Each respondent was asked to describe his or her major technique and the two other techniques, if any, that he or she used next most frequently.

The answers of many respondents indicated that they saw the question as asking about techniques specifically designed to influence the spouse, (for example, "Oh, you mean what's my strategy for getting my own way . . ."); others were careful to present the techniques as not consciously manipulative ("Well, I don't do it on purpose, you know, to get my own way, but I cry when I'm upset and I guess he knows . . ."). Of all the respondents, only one husband said he didn't do anything to influence his wife.

Wives listed more influence techniques than husbands. Ten wives and thirty-six husbands described only one technique; twenty wives and seven husbands described two; twenty wives and six husbands described three. In addition, the lists of primary techniques and total techniques used were somewhat different for husbands and wives (Table 1). In examining the primary techniques, we find more wives than husbands will keep bringing the topic up for discussion (Mrs. T: "Just bringing it up repeatedly. If he sees it coming up all the time and it's important enough he usually gives in."); argue or get angry about it (Mrs. B: "I would slam things around the house and throw a fit."); become withdrawn and silent (Mrs. R: "A very feminine technique, I guess. The only one I resort to is not speaking. He explodes. I don't,I keep it in."); and becomes emotionally upset or cry (Mrs. W: "I get depressed and may cry or be moody. I'll go off by myself but I'll never yell.") More husbands than wives discuss

the topic logically (Mr. P: "Point out the merits, stay away from the points you don't want brought up. Give a good sales pitch."); and act stubborn (Mr. R: "If I'm strongly for it, it would be perseverance, stubbornness. If I was strongly for it, I would keep after her. I would not drop it. Persistance, for a long time.")

For the purposes of analysis, I then grouped the total techniques used into three types: "emotional techniques" which include becoming withdrawn, pouting, using the "silent treatment," crying, becoming emotionally upset and withholding sex; "argumentative techniques" which include being angry, arguing, yelling, telling spouse that he or she would do it anyway, and being stubborn; and "discussion techniques" which include bringing topic up for discussion again, discussing it logically and telling him/her how he/she feels about the issue.

As Table 2 demonstrates, sex is moderately associated with influence techniques grouped in this way (gamma = -.49).* The major difference between husbands' and wives' influence techniques is that while only one husband said he used an "emotional technique," twenty-four of the wives said they did. That is, the wives used as many of the more "open" influence techniques, like discussion and argument, as the husbands did, but used more "manipulative" techniques, like crying or the silent treatment, as well. Perhaps these wives had more success with and/or felt more comfortable with the traditional and more acceptably "feminine" techniques.

In addition to the relationship between sex and influence technique, this researcher was interested in the effect that the perceived marital power structure

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*The measures of association used are Goodman and Kruskal's gamma and Yule's Q (which is gamma for a fourfold table). Gamma is one of several statistics applicable to measuring the strength of association between two ordinal variables. Yule's Q is applicable when both variables are dichotomies. The major advantage in using gamma and Yule's Q is that there are conventions to describe their values. Although recognizing that the guidelines are arbitrary, Davis argues that the ability to make consistent evaluations is important. To that end he proposes describing values of gamma and Yule's Q from .01 to .09 as negligible, from .10 to .29 as low, from .30 to .49 as moderate, from .50 to .69 as substantial and .70 and above as very strong (Davis 1971, p.49).

Table 1

INFLUENCE TECHNIQUES
USED BY HUSBANDS AND WIVES

	Primary Influence Techniques		Total Influence Techniques	
Influence Technique Cited by Spouse:	Husbands	Wives	Husbands	Wives
I would keep bringing the topic up for discussion	4	11	9	27
I would discuss the topic logically, and tell him/her how I felt about it	34	27	34	32
I would be very stubborn	8	5	13	5
I would get angry, I'd argue, I'd yell about it	0	3	4	11
I would tell him/her that I'd do it anyway	3	0	6	5
I'd become withdrawn, I'd pout, I'd use the "silent treatment"	0	2	1	12
I'd cry; I'd become emotionally upset	0	2	0	16
I'd withhold sex	0	0	0	2
	49	50	67	110

Table 2

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SEX OF RESPONDENT
AND INFLUENCE TECHNIQUES USED

		Influence Techniques			
		one or more "argumentative" technique used	one or more "discussion" technique used	one or more "emotional" technique used	
Sex of the Respondent	Husbands	17	35	1	53
	Wives	17	39	24	80
		34	74	25	133*

gamma = -.49

* The total number of influence techniques is greater than 100 because some spouses listed more than 1 technique.

would have on influence techniques. It was hypothesized that spouses who see themselves as relatively powerful would use different influence techniques than those who perceive themselves as less powerful. Because they feel less need to negotiate or be "reasonable," spouses that perceive themselves as powerful are expected to be more likely to demand their own way, be stubborn or tell the spouse that they will do something anyway. On the other hand, spouses who feel they have less power may feel the need to convince or coax the spouse in order to get their own way.

Tables 3 and 4 demonstrate support for this hypothesis. The variable of wife's influence technique is moderately related to the marital power type (gamma = .44); the variable of husband's influence technique is substantially related to the power type (Yule's Q = -.52). We find that while 63% of the wives that use "argumentative techniques" and 58% of those that use "discussion techniques" are in equalitarian marriages, only 27% of the wives that use "emotional techniques" are. The great majority of wives that use "emotional techniques" are in husband dominated marriages (Table 3). Of the husbands that use "argumentative techniques," 67% are in husband dominated marriages and of those that use "discussion techniques," 61% are in equalitarian marriages (Table 4).

These findings may help to explain more fully the stereotype of women as manipulative and men as forthright. It may be that, in addition to sex, it is the amount of power that a spouse perceives him or herself as having that has an impact on the influence techniques that he or she will use. That is, because women are more likely to perceive themselves as less powerful than men are, they may use emotional manipulation more often. But wives in equalitarian marriages may not need to use the emotional approaches that wives in husband dominated marriages do. Instead they can present their desires logically, and

Table 3

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INFLUENCE TECHNIQUES
WIFE SAYS SHE USES BY MARITAL POWER TYPE

		Influence Techniques			
		one or more "argumentative" technique used	one or more "discussion" technique used	one or more "emotional" technique used	
Perceived Marital Power Type *	Husband dominated (n=19)	6	15	16	37
	Equalitarian (n=22)	10	21	6	37
		16	36	22	74**

gamma = .44

* Wife dominated couples (n=5) and couples with differently perceived power structures (n=4) are omitted from the table because of the low frequencies.

** The total number of influence techniques is greater than the number of wives because some wives listed more than one technique.

Table 4

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INFLUENCE TECHNIQUES HUSBAND SAYS HE USES BY MARITAL POWER TYPE

		Influence Techniques		
		one or more "argumentative" technique used	one or more "discussion" technique used	
Perceived Marital Power Type *	Husband dominated (n=19)	10	12	22
	Equalitarian (n=22)	5	19	24
		15	31	46**

Yule's Q = -.52

* Wife dominated couples (n=5) and couples with differently perceived power structures (n=4) are omitted from the table because of the low frequencies.

** The total number of influence techniques is greater than the number of husbands because some husbands listed more than one technique.

if that does not work, it is possible that they have enough power to argue forcefully for their goals.

On the other hand, men in equalitarian marriages may not be as able to be as demanding and argumentative in approaching their wives as men in husband dominated marriages can be. Men in equalitarian marriages may lack the power to "bully" their wives and may need to rely on discussion in order to persuade them.

Marital Violence. To date, there have been few studies on marital violence (Gelles 1974, 1976; Levinger 1974; O'Brien 1971). Of those studies on the topic, each selected at least part of its sample in a way that had potential biases (i.e., divorcing couples, police "blotter" families). While the sample used in this study did not contain those biases, there are, in addition to the sampling considerations previously discussed, two factors which might have resulted in an underrepresentation of violence-prone couples. The first possible limitation of this study's sample its middle class nature. Gelles, for example, found marital violence greatest in families earning $3,000-$4,999 and least in families earning over $15,000 (1974, p.126). Secondly, all of the husbands in the sample were employed. Husband's unemployment is often a stress that contributes to violence (Gelles 1974). O'Brien, for example, found that compared to non-violent families, there was evidence of underachievement and deficient achievement potential in the men's work roles in the violent divorce-prone families (1971, p.695).*

Given these considerations, we can turn to an examination of the frequency with which marital violence occurred in this sample of fifty families. Physical violence is defined as the intentional use of physical force on another person (Steinmetz and Straus 1974, p.3). Data on violence was obtained by asking each

*And, it is also very possible that the families with the most violence were most likely to refuse to participate in this study.

spouse if he or she had ever hit or tried to physically hurt their spouse in some way and if he or she had ever been hit by the spouse.* Although the husbands' and wives' reports of the use of physical violence against the spouses were very highly correlated, there were some discrepancies in reporting. Because of the social undersirability of using physical force on family members, it was assumed that if only one spouse reported violence, that spouse was giving the more accurate version.

In twenty of the couples (40%), spouses reported hitting, slapping, punching, scratching, kicking, pushing, or throwing things at the other at least once during the marriage. In eight of the couples (16%), violence had occurred at least several times. Among the couples in which violence had occurred, husbands and wives were about equally likely to initiate the violence and to respond violently once the other had begun.

Although husbands' and wives' use of physical force against each other were highly correlated, there were three couples in which the wife used violence against the husband at least once, but he had never used violence against her, and four couples in which he had used violence against her but she had not reciprocated. We therefore need to analyze the violence used by husbands against wives and the violence used by wives against husbands separately.

While Gelles found husbands to use violence somewhat more frequently than wives, in this study the amount of violence used by the two sexes was almost the same. Seventeen of the husbands (34%) used violence against their wives at least once during their marriage and six husbands (12%) used it at least several times. Of the thirty-three husbands who had never used violence, three did use what can be considered "threatening" gestures. That is, the husband's actions,

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*Behavior that spouses described as "playful," "fooling around" or mock fighting was not classified as violence since the object was not to hurt the other spouse.

while not directed at the wife may have served as a warning that they could be. Two spouses described these episodes as follows:

> Mrs. 25: "He slams things around. Not at me, but in general."
>
> Mr. 11: "Once I got so mad I threw a sandwich at her. Back about four years ago, I was giving the kids a haircut, and she was giving me a hard time about something and I picked up the shears and walked around the kitchen with them for awhile."

Most couples report more than one kind of violence used against the wife. The most frequent kind of violence that husbands used was hitting, slapping, kicking or punching their wives. Throwing things and pushing or shoving were also fairly common. Only one husband used a weapon. In this case the husband threatened the wife with a knife by throwing it near, but not at her.

Sixteen of the wives (32%) used violence against their husbands at least once during the marriages. Of these, six (12%) used violence at least several times. None of the wives used "threatening" gestures. Slapping, hitting, scratching, punching and kicking are clearly the most common kinds of violence in which the wives engage. One wife used a weapon. In this case she held a razor against the husband's throat but did not cut him.

It is important to note that in six of the sixteen cases in which the wife used violence, her behavior is defined as ineffective and/or not threatening. The following comments illustrate how her actions are perceived.

> Mr. 9: "Oh yes! [My wife hits me] but she can beat me all over my head and it won't hurt me."
>
> Mrs. 19: "Yes, I hit him. One night he got me really aggravated and I hit him a couple of times in the arm. And as he stood there laughing at me I belted him a couple of times; I belted him again. I felt better after. He laughed. He thought it was hilarious." (Mr. 19 commented that while the episode didn't bother him, his wife hurt her hand and was so upset that she cried).

As these spouses' comments illustrate, in over one third of the cases where a wife used violence against her husband, she just is not taken seriously. Her behavior is defined as amusing, or as most, annoying. In the seventeen cases where husbands were violent, not one spouse felt this way about his use of violence. In all seventeen cases his use of violence is defined as far from trivial.

Violence and perceived marital power. Because families, like all other social units or social systems are power systems, Goode (1971) argues that, on whatever else they rest, their foundation to some degree is force or its threat. As Steinmetz and Straus argue, a family member can use the resource of physical violence to "compensate for lack of such other social resources as money, knowledge and respect. Thus, when the social system does not provide a family member with sufficient resources to maintain his or her position in the family, violence will tend to be used by those who can do so" (1974, p.9).

When the relationship between physical violence and perceived marital power is examined in this study, the use of violence by the husband against the wife is substantially associated with perceived power type (Table 5), but the use of violence by the wife against the husband has only a low association with that variable (Table 6). While 47% of the wives in marriages perceived to be husband dominated had physical violence used against them, only 23% of the wives in perceived equalitarian marriages did.

One explanation for the lack of correlation between violence and power for the wives can be found in the wives' abilities' rather than their willingness to use violence:

> Women may be as motivated to violence as men are, but since their physical equipment for violence is less effective in actual use, they are at a great disadvantage in a physical encounter. It is true that here, as elsewhere, technology modifies "natural relationships." Guns, bombs, and poisons are great equalizers between men women as well as between men (Bernard 1971, p.251).

TABLE 5

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PHYSICAL VIOLENCE BY THE HUSBAND AGAINST THE WIFE AND PERCEIVED MARITAL POWER TYPE

		Marital Power Type*		
		husband dominated	equalitarian	
physical violence used against the wife	physical violence was used against the wife	9	5	14
	no physical violence was used against the wife	10	18	28
		19	23	41

Yule's Q = -.53

TABLE 6

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PHYSICAL VIOLENCE BY THE WIFE AGAINST THE HUSBAND AND MARITAL POWER TYPE

		Marital Power Type*		
		husband dominated	equalitarian	
physical violence used against husband	physical violence was used against the husband	7	7	14
	no physical violence was used against the husband	12	15	27
		19	22	41

Yule's Q = .09

*wife dominated couples (n=5) and couples with differently perceived power structures (n=4) are omitted from the table because of the low frequencies.

Evidence of Bernard's point can be found in this study. Among the fifty couples, there was only one in which the husband was judged to be physically smaller than the wife, and only one in which the spouses were judged to be the same size. In addition, forty-nine of the husbands and forty-eight of the wives felt that the husband was physically stronger than the wife. (The other respondents reported that the husband had been the stronger, prior to an illness.) Therefore, without the use of weapons,* it was possible for almost all of the husbands to have used physical force as a means of controlling their wives.

Therefore, the lack of correlation between power and violence for the wives can be attributed to their size, strength and as previously discussed, the fact that their husbands often do not take seriously their use of violence. On the other hand, the husbands, bigger, stronger and posing a more serious threat, clearly have the ability to use what Allen and Straus (1975) call the "ultimate resource" - physical violence - in order to obtain control over the marriage. It is also possible to hypothesize that the relationship between the two variables involves "feedback." That is, in addition to obtaining power through the threat or actual use of violence, those with more power may be more willing to use violence. As O'Brien (1971, p.693) argues:

> Conflict in a social group is thought to be most likely to occur during the decision making process. Such a process is conducted according to some established authority pattern that is vested in a status hierarchy . . . Hence from an external perspective, violence is most often seen to be constituted of actions through which the incumbents of different status positions are maneuvering for control of some decision outcome. In the

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*In this study, only one husband and one wife were reported to have threatened their spouses with weapons. As Goode (1971) suggests, although families may ultimately be based on force, the fact that other "resources" are likely to be used first probably acts to limit the use of weapons in families. A family member using a weapon has not only admitted he or she has no other social resources, but has seriously violated the ideology of the family as a system based on affection.

> process of that struggle, if the members of the subordinate status position fail to concede the decision, then the superior group will typically exert coercive power in order to influence the outcome of the decision.
>
> In short, violence in the larger society most frequently occurs between persons who are differentiated as superior-subordinate based on their respective position in some social category and tends to erupt in times when less extreme forms of conflict resolution are found to be unworkable.

We can conclude that men who have used violence even once have an additional power resource* and are therefore more likely to be found in marriages the spouses' judge husband dominated. We can also conclude that men who see themselves as dominant may feel freer to use violence against their wives. The interconnection between the two variables is illustrated by the following comments of two of our respondents, both of whom are wives in perceived <u>equalitarian</u> marriages:

> Mrs. 35: I've never hit him and I never will. And if he ever touched me, I'd leave him.
>
> Mrs. 37: He kids about the fact that he once spanked the boys' mother and I made it clear that this had better never happen here.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This research has suggested an alternative methodology for the study of marital power which avoids some of the problems of the previous research. The classification scheme used does more than tabulate simple "win scores." It deals with the way in which spouses' view their marriages, how they feel the other spouse sees the marriage and how satisfying they find the perceived reality to be. It allows an outsider to get two "inside" views and to compare them. In this way the couple can be classified and the quality of the marriage examined. For example, it is interesting to note that the power structures which conform

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*To be a resource, violence may not need to be used frequently. The wife whose husband has used violence, even once, knows that he is capable of it and may do so again. That is, the threat of the use of violence may be sufficient to make it a resource.

to the two patterns that are about equally acceptable in American society are satisfying to the great majority of the spouses in them. Equalitarian couples fulfill the American ideals of equality and marriage for companionship. Husband dominated marriages meet the norm of the male as the "head of the household" that traditional sex roles support. On one level or the other, both of these marital power types are living an American dream. It is the spouses in wife dominated families that are more likely to feel dissatisfied. Although objectively the structure of these families is much like that of the husband dominated families, the husbands in these families keenly felt the societal stigma. Given societal norms, the "hen pecked" husband the "rooster pecked" wife are likely to perceive very different realities.

The paper has also examined the relationship of both sex and perceived power type to the kind of influence techniques that spouses use in the different types of marriages. And it has considered the possible connections between the use of violence and the perceived ability to control the spouse.

Marital power remains an important area for social research. Perhaps the reason that so much research has been done on the topic is that, far from being a "rut" a consideration of marital power can become an important pathway to a general understanding of the family.

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